

Assisting Patients with Emergency Medications

According to California law all Paramedics may function under the EMT scope of practice:

100145. Scope of Practice of Paramedic.

A paramedic may perform any activity identified in the scope of practice of an EMT in Chapter 2 of this Division [including] Administer approved medications by the following routes: intravenous, intramuscular, subcutaneous, inhalation, transcutaneous, rectal, sublingual, endotracheal, oral or topical

State law also allows EMTs to assist patients with the administration of prescribed emergency medications:

100063. Scope of Practice of Emergency Medical Technician.

Assist patients with the administration of physician prescribed devices, including but not limited to, patient operated medication pumps, sublingual nitroglycerin, and **self-administered emergency medications**, including epinephrine devices.

This means any EMT or Paramedic may assist any patient with self administration of any 'emergency' medication. The term "emergency" medications" is not fully defined but is generally understood to include any medication that must be given in the field because waiting for transport to a higher level provider to administer the medication would result in death or injury. Effectively, there are no limits to the types of medications as long as it could be shown there was an emergency need. The only limit would be on the route as EMTs are effectively not allowed to use the IV or IM route.

Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia is a situation where Paramedics might be asked to assist with the IM administration of a specific emergency medication. Some children are born with a genetic defect that prevents their body from producing adequate amounts of Cortisol. (an essential hormone*) The signs & symptoms of an adrenal crisis includes: nausea, fever, pallor, confusion, weakness, tachycardia, tachypnea, hypotension and shock. Symptoms that might lead to their death.

Families who have such a child will be very aware of their condition. When these children experience an adrenal crisis the proper treatment is the IM administration of the drug Solu-Cortef. During this emergency situation the parents or caregivers may not be able to properly deliver the IM medication and might request assistance from the EMS system. In this type of an emergency situation Paramedics can certainly assist the parents or caregivers with drawing up and administering the Solu-Cortef. The family members should be familiar with the proper dosage and should have the necessary equipment.

Although this condition might not be recognized until puberty the vast majority of cases would be recognized at birth and treatment would begin as infants. LA Co Ref. #808 states that all children age 36 months or less shall be transported to the hospital, and that would include these patients. Depending upon the presenting symptoms base contact may not be necessary. If you do need any assistance or have questions then making base contact would be appropriate.

**Cortisol is a steroid hormone produced by the adrenal gland. It is released in response to stress and low levels of cortisol. Its main functions are to increase blood sugar, suppress the immune system (inflammation) and aids in fat, protein and carbohydrate metabolism. (Low-potency hydrocortisone is sold over the counter)*